FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the provision of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality, 40 CFR 1508.9, the National Park Service (NPS) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), Wildland Fire Management Plan. The EA was released November 17, 2004. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) describes the preferred alternative, presents the alternatives considered, summarizes public involvement, and makes a finding of no significant impact.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR FEDERAL ACTION

The purpose of this federal action is to develop and improve the park's fire management program to protect human life, property, and cultural resources and to maintain or restore natural resources. The park area was expanded 53% by the acquisition of the 116,000-acre Kahuku unit with its new fire environments. In particular, the new acquisition includes approximately 8,000 acres of cattle pastures. As cattle grazing is phased out, the grass and brush dominated pastures will become especially vulnerable to fire spread. In 2002 and 2003, fire affected nearly all the wet and mesic forest on the East Rift of Kilauea. Recovery of native vegetation in burned East Rift forests is jeopardized by an ongoing volcanic eruption and high volumes of unburned surface fuels left by the widespread fires of 2002-2003. Invasive species continue to be the main natural resource issue with wildland fire. Most park fires are carried by introduced, fire-promoting species and invasive species typically invade after wildland fire. Prescribed fire, however, is potentially a powerful tool to restore or rehabilitate damaged ecosystems or restore native species that benefit from fire. Fire and more typically fire suppression operations can irreversibly harm park cultural resources. Park fire management and resource staffs have recently developed systems and are specially trained to mitigate damage to cultural resources. Portions of the growing communities of Volcano and Ocean View that are on the park's boundaries are threatened by fire starting in the park; park resources are threatened by fire starting in the communities. With frequent lava flows, natural ignition sources are prevalent and a park policy on fires of natural origin needs to be reevaluated in terms of the most recent evidence of the impacts of fire.

The EA evaluated two alternatives and was available for a 30-day public review period.

ALTERNATIVE 2—SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

After careful review of public comments and impacts to affected resources and visitor use, the NPS selected Alternative 2, the preferred alternative for implementation, as

presented in the EA. This alternative includes all changes to be made to the park's Fire Management Plan: All unplanned fires of human origin will be suppressed. All fires of natural origin will be suppressed except for fires in isolated kipuka in the Coastal Lowland, Alpine, and Subalpine Fire Management Units that are surrounded by extensive lava flows and where resource damage such as loss of rare species or expected invasion of alien species would not occur. Prescribed fire will be used to help restore native vegetation in the Coastal Lowland and Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Units.

Fire use and prescribed fire will be allowed only in those areas of the park where there are extensive barriers to fire spread past the park boundaries. The Coastal Lowland, Alpine, and Subalpine Fire Management Units are in areas where there are extensive lava flows along the park boundaries. The area where prescribed fire will be used in the Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Unit is along the Hilina Pali Road, 3-10 miles from park boundaries, and bordered by lava flows and dense rain forest. The Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Unit does extend up to the Volcano Golf Course Subdivision; however, fire use (natural fire) is not proposed for this Fire Management Unit and prescribed fire will not be allowed in this portion of the unit.

The preferred alternative also includes these actions: The park will continue to control invasive fountain grass, a potentially hazardous fuel that colonizes young, sparsely vegetated lava flows and dry forests and shrublands. Limited use of manual and chemical treatments will continue to prevent the widespread establishment of new alien species and facilitate native plant revegetation, including rare plants. The park will maintain or establish fuel breaks in fire-prone areas or in high value resource areas, either mechanically or by establishing fire-resistant vegetation. The park will revegetate burned areas with fire-tolerant, native vegetation environments if feasible and necessary.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The EA evaluated two alternatives.

Alternative 1 – No Action. Continue current fire management policies, goals, and strategies described in the approved 1990 Fire Management Plan. These include immediate suppression of all unplanned fires of human origin and suppression of all wildland fires, with no role for wildland fire use (that is, all lightning and lava caused fires will be suppressed). The no action alternative provides for experimental use of prescribed fire for ecological restoration and for rare species recovery. Prescribed fire would be allowed only in those areas of the park where there are extensive barriers to fire spread past the park boundaries.

The park will continue to suppress unplanned fires of human origin. The park will continue to control invasive fountain grass, a potentially hazardous fuel that colonizes young, sparsely vegetated lava flows and dry forests and shrublands. Limited use of manual and chemical treatments will continue to prevent the widespread establishment

of new alien species and facilitate native plant revegetation, including rare plants. The park will maintain or establish fuel breaks in fire-prone areas or in high value resource areas, either mechanically or by establishing fire-resistant vegetation. The park will revegetate burned areas with fire-tolerant, native vegetation environments if feasible and necessary.

Alternative 2, the selected alternative, is described above.

Two other alternatives were provisionally considered in the development of the EA and then dismissed without analyzing environmental impacts:

1. *Allow all fires of natural origin to spread under appropriate conditions*. This was not considered in the environmental analysis because fire is known to be harmful to native plants and animals in some park ecosystems and some fires of natural origin may spread to areas outside the park if not suppressed.

2. *Use mechanical, manual, and chemical treatments on a landscape scale to reduce hazardous fuels.* These kinds of treatments are feasible only in very small areas, not on a landscape scale.

The Environmental Assessment does not address all possible actions under the selected alternative. For example, the alternative allows for the establishment of fuel breaks but neither specifies new fuel break locations or specifications. Constructing a new fuel break could require additional NEPA compliance. Control of additional hazardous fuels could require another NEPA process. Under the second alternative, the EA addresses impacts of prescribed fire in the Coastal Lowland and Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Units and fire use in the Coastal Lowland, Subalpine, and Alpine Fire Management Units. Fire use and prescribed fire as a management tool in other Fire Management Units will require additional NEPA compliance. Other fire management activities not identified and analyzed in the programmatic EA would be subject to suitable environmental compliance later, as appropriate.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying criteria described in section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act and implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations. These criteria are:

1. Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.

2. Assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.

3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.

4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain wherever possible an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.

5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Alternative 2 is the environmentally preferable alternative. This alternative includes all changes to be made to the park's Fire Management Plan: All unplanned fires of human origin will be suppressed. All fires of natural origin will be suppressed except for fires in isolated kipuka in the Coastal Lowlands, Alpine, and Subalpine Fire Management Units without a chance of fire spread beyond the kipuka or potential for resource damage. Prescribed fire will be used to help restore native vegetation in the Coastal Lowland and Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Units.

Similar to Alternative 1, the park will continue fire management actions to reduce hazardous fuels and prevent fire spread. The park will continue controlling invasive fountain grass, a hazardous fuel that colonizes young, mostly barren lava flows and dry forests and shrublands. The park will maintain or establish fuel breaks in fire-prone areas or in high value resource areas, either mechanically or by establishing fire-resistant vegetation. The park will revegetate burned areas with fire-tolerant native vegetation environments if feasible and necessary. The limited use of manual and chemical treatments to prevent the widespread establishment of new alien grasses and facilitate revegetation of native plants, including rare plant recovery, is allowed.

Alternative 2 was selected as the environmentally preferable alternative because it overall best protects and enhances park resources. Both alternatives protect park resources and prevent the spread of invasive species by requiring the suppression of fires, both from human origin and natural origin; preventing the spread of fountain grass; using fuel breaks as a strategy; and encouraging revegetation of burned areas. The environmentally preferable alternative, by applying the knowledge gained in the last decade, broadens the use of prescribed fire as a management tool for restoring native vegetation in the Coastal Lowland and Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Units, areas of the park most altered by invasive weeds. Alternative 2 allows the spread of lightning or lava caused fires in small, isolated kipuka in the coastal lowland, subalpine, and alpine zones, which will provide opportunities for evaluating fire effects and the use of fire as a restoration technique. However, these fires will not be allowed to spread within these kipuka if they will enhance the spread of invasive vegetation to the detriment of recovering native vegetation. Most fires from lava flows or lightning will be suppressed in the park, including those in other management zones and those in the alpine, subalpine, and coastal lowlands that are not in isolated kipuka or that are in areas where fire would threaten park resources.

Wilderness resources are protected under the environmentally preferable alternative. Fire management actions proposed for wilderness include suppression in some cases, fire use in defined circumstances as described above, and prescribed fire for restoration purposes. All of these fire management actions are important in administering wilderness because they protect critical wilderness qualities of biological diversity and ecological integrity. These wilderness qualities are characterized in the park's draft Wilderness Management Plan. The minimum tool for fire management actions in wilderness under Alternative 2 may include the use of helicopters, construction of fire lines, and revegetation after fire. These minimum tools are justified in the draft Wilderness Management Plan.

Alternative 1 was not selected as the environmentally preferred method. Under the previous Fire Management Plan, restoration of communities highly altered by invasive grasses (Coastal Lowland and Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Units) was opportunistic and largely limited to areas where natural wildfires occurred. Prescribed fire use was experimental and focused on answering narrow research questions; fire size was small and limited to isolated kipuka. Under these conditions, areas with the greatest need or highest potential for native plant restoration were not necessarily included. Alternative 2 approaches long-term restoration of the landscape by incorporating the planned use of fire.

WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 CFR 1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Table one summarizes the impact category and mitigation requirement for the preferred alternative, Alternative 2. All impacts are site specific or local. There are direct and indirect impacts. All impacts that are potentially beneficial range from negligible to major. All impacts that are potentially adverse are either negligible or minor. There are many mitigating measures to be taken by park staff and fire management personnel to reduce impacts on park visitors, surrounding communities and landowners, and the park's natural and cultural resources.

Table 1. Impact and Mitigation Summary

Impact Topic	Impact	Mitigation Requirement	Responsibility
Air Quality	Smoke production enhanced by potential for limited wildland fire use and prescribed fire. Local, direct and indirect, short term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts.	Minimize smoke production by conducting prescribed fires only when conditions favor smoke dispersal.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource

Impact Topic	Impact	Mitigation Requirement	Responsibility
			Advisors.
Soils	Vegetation recovery or persistence of litter and humus minimizes fire effects. Site specific and local, short and long term, indirect, minor adverse impacts.	Minimize erosion potential by avoiding intense prescribed fires.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Water Resources and Wetlands	Low fire potential in the vicinity of water resources and wetlands. Mitigation using Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) to avoid contamination of water resources. Site specific and local, short and long term, indirect, negligible impacts.	Use of herbicides in hazard fuel reduction or foam during fire operations will be avoided when there is a potential for contamination of waterways (based on proximity, wind direction, wind speed, size, and frequency of loads, etc.). Retardants are not used in the park. Reduce impacts from sedimentation by minimizing soil disturbance upslope of wetlands.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Wilderness	Use Minimum Tools such as helicopter flights, chain saws, weed eaters, landing zones, fire lines, and safety zones. Local, short and long term, direct and indirect, minor adverse impacts	Use of Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics. Use of Minimum Requirement/ Minimum Tool decision making process.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Soundscapes	Impacts from use of helicopters, chain saws, and weed eaters. Potentially more extensive impacts because of fire use and prescribed fire. Site specific and local, short term, direct and indirect negligible adverse impacts.	Use of Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors
Wildland/Urban Interface	Suppression of fires in wildland/urban interface protects life, property, and resources. Local, long term, direct and indirect, negligible beneficial impacts.	Fire use and prescribed fire will be allowed only in those areas of the park where there are extensive barriers to fire spread past the park boundaries.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Vegetation	Suppression of most fires. Protection of fire-sensitive	Maps of focal plants and plant communities and use of	Fire Management and Resource

Impact Topic	Impact	Mitigation Requirement	Responsibility
	native plant communities from fire. Protection of native plant communities from spread of invasive plants through fire exclusion. Restoration of plant communities using prescribed fire followed by revegetation. Site specific and local, long term, direct and indirect, minor or potentially major beneficial impacts.	Resource Advisors to protect sensitive vegetation. Monitoring to assess the role of fire and invasive plants in Subalpine and Alpine Fire Management Units. If fire stimulates invasive species to the detriment of native vegetation, adjustments could be made in fire use policy.	Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Wildlife	Protection of native wildlife through exclusion of fire from native habitats, as appropriate. Expanded habitat improvement through prescribed fire followed by revegetation. Site specific and local, long term, direct and indirect, minor or potentially major beneficial impacts.	Mapping of focal species ranges and habitat. Use of Resource Advisors to protect sensitive species and habitat.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Threatened/ Endangered Species and Species of Special Concern	Potential for more extensive impacts on rare species because of fire use and prescribed fire. Prescribed fire and revegetation will restore habitat for lowland T&E species. Site specific and local, long term, direct and indirect, minor or potentially major beneficial impacts.	Fire use and prescribed fire would not be allowed or used in areas with rare species unless these species were known to respond favorably or can be protected from fire.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Caves	Fire exclusion will protect ohia roots and thus cave adapted organisms. With prescribed fire and fire use, potentially more extensive impacts to cave ecosystems. Use of Resource Advisors to protect caves during fire operations. Site specific, short and long term, direct and indirect, minor or possible major beneficial impacts.	Use of Resource Advisors to keep fire fighters out of caves. Avoid areas with known cave resources during prescribed fire and fire use.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.

Impact Topic	Impact	Mitigation Requirement	Responsibility
Visitor Use and Experience	Potential for closures and smoke with fire suppression, fire use, and prescribed fire. Site specific and local, short term, direct and indirect, minor adverse impacts.	Interpretation of fire use and prescribed fire on site as mitigation.	Chief Interpreter; Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Socioeconomics	Short term economic benefits to local vendors/communities from fire suppression operations. Local, short term, direct and indirect, minor beneficial impacts on the economy of local communities.	NA	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer.
Prime or Unique Farmlands	Fire exclusion protects neighboring unique farmlands. Local, direct and indirect, short and long term, minor largely beneficial impacts.	Largely fire exclusion policy minimizes potential for fire to leave the park. Fire use and prescribed fire not allowed in the FMUs that are near Prime or Unique Farmlands. Fire use and prescribed fire allowed only in those areas of the park where there are extensive barriers to fire spread past the park boundaries.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Archeological Resources	Reduced impacts from fire suppression activities; however, possible increased impacts from direct fire effects. Site specific and local, direct and indirect, short and long term minor impacts.	No natural fire or prescribed fire use if negative (adverse) impacts can't be mitigated. Consult with Cultural Resources staff for fire planning and implementation, manual and chemical treatments to prevent new alien grass establishment and facilitate revegetation of native plants, controlling fountain grass, maintaining or establishing fuel breaks, and revegetating burned areas.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Historic Structures	Possible impacts to resources from suppression activities. Site specific and local, direct and indirect, short and long term, minor impacts.	No natural fire or prescribed fire if negative (adverse) impacts can't be mitigated. Consult with Cultural Resources staff for fire planning and implementation, manual and	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource

Impact Topic	Impact	Mitigation Requirement	Responsibility
		chemical treatments to prevent new alien grass establishment and facilitate revegetation of native plants, controlling fountain grass, maintaining or establishing fuel breaks, and revegetating burned areas.	Advisors.
Cultural Landscapes	Reduced impacts from fire suppression activities; however, possible increased impacts from direct fire effects. Site specific and local, direct and indirect, short and long term, minor impacts.	No natural fire or prescribed fire use if negative (adverse) impacts can't be mitigated. Consult with Cultural Resources staff for fire planning and implementation, manual and chemical treatments to prevent new alien grass establishment and facilitate revegetation of native plants, controlling fountain grass, maintaining or establishing fuel breaks, and revegetating burned areas.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.
Ethnographic Resources	Reduced impacts from fire suppression activities; however, possible increased impacts from direct fire effects. Site specific and local, direct and indirect, short and long term, minor impacts.	No natural fire or prescribed fire use if negative (adverse) impacts can't be mitigated. Consult with Cultural Resources staff for fire planning and implementation, manual and chemical treatments to prevent new alien grass establishment and facilitate revegetation of native plants, controlling fountain grass, maintaining or establishing fuel breaks, and revegetating burned areas.	Fire Management and Resource Management staff, specifically Fire Management Officer, Incident Commanders on fire, and Resource Advisors.

Degree of effect on public health or safety.

There would be no effect on public health or safety. Prescribed fires would only be conducted when conditions favor smoke dispersal. During fires, the fire incident area would be closed and this would include road and trail closures if necessary. Visitors on trails or in the park backcountry would be evacuated if they were in a fire closure area.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Unique characteristics of the areas potentially affected by Alternative 2 include wilderness; soundscapes; vegetation; wildlife; threatened and endangered species, species of special concern, and critical habitat; caves; archeological resources; historic structures; cultural landscapes; and ethnographic resources. Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park was designated as a World Heritage Site and an International Biosphere Reserve. Mitigating measures that would reduce impacts on the unique characteristics of the park are highlighted in Table 1.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

There were no highly controversial effects identified during preparation of the environmental assessment, during the public review period, or from the section 7 and section 106 consultation.

The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no highly uncertain effects. There are no apparent unique or unknown risks.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts, or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Alternative 2 is consistent with the park's 1974 Master Plan and the 1999 Resource Management Plan. Nothing described in the preferred alternative precludes or constrains future actions, nor does it commit the NPS to other impacts with significant impacts. It does not set a precedent for future actions with significant impacts or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Implementing the preferred alternative will have no significant, cumulative impact. The EA addressed cumulative impacts for each of the resources that could be affected by the alternatives being considered.

Degree to which an action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

Implementation of Alternative 2 should have no adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places and should not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. If adverse effects were anticipated section 106 consultation would occur. No natural or prescribed fire use would occur if adverse effects couldn't be mitigated.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species.

Alternative 2 would have no adverse effect on endangered or threatened species. Fire use and prescribed fire would not be allowed or used in areas with rare species unless these species were known to respond favorably or could be protected from fire.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

No such violations will occur.

IMPAIRMENT

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the National Park Service determined that implementation of the preferred alternative will not constitute an impairment to Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the EA, the public comments received, relevant scientific studies, and the professional judgement of the decision-maker guided by NPS Management Policies 2001. As described in the EA, the preferred alternative implementation will not result in major, adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is 1) Necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park, 2) Key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or 3) Identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents. Overall, the preferred alternative results in benefits to park resources and values, and opportunities for their enjoyment, and does not result in their impairment. The preferred alternative will not violate the NPS Organic Act.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Multi-day scoping sessions were held on the park's fire management program and plan. In October 1996 a two day meeting was held with fire researchers, resource managers, and Hawai`i State and County fire personnel. Information about park programs, fuels, fire effects, fire policy, and fire strategies were shared formally by presentation, question and answer sessions, and an afternoon field trip. An intensive, detailed three-day scoping session occurred in June 2000, with researchers and fire managers from Hawai`i and the Mainland addressing fuels, fire behavior, and fire effects. In 2001 and 2003, two After Dark in the Park fire presentations were given to the public. The 2001 presentation was on the Broomsedge Fire (Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Unit) and the 2003 presentation was on the Kupukupu Fire (Mesic/Wet Forest Fire Management Unit). Discussion topics included restoration, ecological impacts, and fire suppression policy and strategy for each fire, as well as the history of conducting prescribed fire for ecological restoration research. Public scoping meetings were held September 18, and October 21-23, 2003, to receive public comments on National Park

Service management of the newly acquired Kahuku Unit. Fire was a topic that repeatedly came up and public comments included: 1) What kind of plan or capacity is planned in the event of a forest fire? And 2) Develop a fire management/protection plan.

The Wildland Fire Management Plan EA was made available for a thirty-day public review on November 18, 2004. The EA was sent to approximately 94 interested parties, 12 Hawai`i island libraries, and the Hawai`i State Library. A news release was distributed to 2 Hawai`i island newspapers and 2 Oahu newspapers on November 18, 2004. Information about the EA appeared in at least two of the four newspapers: on November 26 in the Honolulu Star Bulletin and on November 30 in the Hawai`i Tribune Herald. The EA was available for review on the park web site (www.nps.gov/havo) on November 18, 2004.

Few comments were received on the EA. The County of Hawai`i Fire Department Chief sent in a comment in support of Alternative 2. Senator Akaka commented that he "was pleased to see the inclusion of the new Kahuku Ranch Unit in the proposed fire management program." Three letters were received from individuals within the community. One of the letters commented that research fires should be included within Alternative 2, as they are included in Alternative 1. The response to this comment is that the language in Alternative 2 was very general about the purpose of prescribed fire. The intent was to have research burns covered by the general language: "Prescribed fire will be used to help restore native vegetation in the Coastal Lowland and Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Units." Research burns may be needed to achieve that purpose but they were not specifically referenced. An Errata was prepared to the EA clarifying the role of research burns in the Preferred Alternative.

Another letter commented that the EA was detailed and professional. A third letter commented on the printing format of the EA. No comments disagreed with the proposal and no comments resulted in changes to the text of the environmental assessment. The FONSI or notification of FONSI availability will be mailed to those on the EA mailing list and to those who commented.

CONSULTATION

The EA was sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in compliance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS concurred with the assessment that Alternative 2 is not likely to adversely affect threatened and endangered species or plant critical habitat if the following provisions were included for prescribed fire: 1) conduct surveys for `Io nests in areas where prescribed burns are planned. If nests are found do not conduct prescribed burns near them during the `Io breeding season. 2) Searches for all threatened and endangered species, including `Io nests, will be conducted in prescribed burning areas for the purpose of avoidance during fire operations unless fire will be beneficial to these species. And, 3) Not conducting prescribed burns in areas below 4,000 feet where Hawaiian hoary boats could be breeding during June through August. The USFWS agreed that the issue of a summer

fire ban could be revisited when park staff acquire more information about bats in the park.

Section 106 consultation occurred with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai`i Nei, Historic Hawai`i, Edith Kanaka`ole Foundation, Big Island Burial Council, and The Kalapana Ohana. The consultation letter stated that the National Park Service believes that a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties is appropriate for the undertaking. No comments were received in response. Some members of the park's Kupuna Consultation Group were mailed a copy of the EA. Only one comment was received and it was in support of the preferred alternative.

CONCLUSION

Based on information contained in the EA as summarized above, the nature of comments received during the public review period, and the capability of the mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential impacts, it is the determination of the National Park Service that the proposed action will not constitute a major federal action that will significantly affect the human environment. Therefore, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act regulations, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required; the Preferred Alternative as detailed in the Fire Management Plan EA may be implemented immediately.

Recommended: /s/ Aleta Knight, Acting Superintendent Date: 12/30/04
Cynthia L. Orlando
Superintendent

Approved: /s/ Date: 1/4/05
Jonathan B. Jarvis
Regional Director, Pacific West Region